

Participants at the Africa Crop Forum 2026. Credit: Alastair Fyfe.

05

AFRICA CROP FORUM 2026

From ideas to impact: Africa Crop Forum 2026 strengthens the partnerships that address realities on the ground in Africa

The Africa Crop Forum 2026, held from 12 to 14 October in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, was a catalyst for innovative ideas and partnerships to address realities on ground in Africa. Organised by WAVE RESEARCH and the Cambridge University Crop Science Centre, the Africa Crop Forum 2026 brought together researchers, plant breeders, funders and farmers from 14 African countries. Together, they discussed ideas and co-developed solutions to strengthen climate resilience, combat crop diseases and improve food security across Africa.

Turning African priorities into action

Participants first had the opportunity to see cassava plants in the field and to learn how they are processed and cooked into much-loved dishes such as attiéké and foutou. As the forum is founded on the principle that effective solutions emerge when research is grounded in African priorities, they then explored a range of agricultural challenges, from drought, soil health, pests and diseases to seed systems, breeding pipelines and sustainable food systems. Through interactive sessions and networking, participants connected across disciplines, institutions and countries. In doing so, they worked together to develop collaborative project ideas capable of delivering concrete impact.

> "The **Africa Crop Forum 2026** brought together young African scientists who want to change Africa.
>
> **Pr Justin S. Pita,**
> Executive Director of **WAVE RESEARCH**

"This meeting gave them the opportunity to pool their ideas and build links to bring about that change. I have no doubt that in three years' time we will see the tangible impact of this".

This sentiment was shared by **Professor Uta Paszkowski, Director of the Crop Science Centre at the University of Cambridge**, who added: **"I was inspired by this sense of collaboration. We are truly crossing boundaries, breaking them down in fact, and bringing people together to move things forward".**

Supporting the next generation of agricultural innovation

A particular objective of the Forum was to support the next generation of agricultural scientists who will lead future research and innovation across the continent. Early-career scientists played a significant role throughout the event, leading discussions and building professional networks

that can evolve into lasting collaborations. **“The forum gave me the opportunity to exchange with people from different fields and research areas,”** said **Miring’u Newton Nyagah, Research Associate at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kenya. “It gave me more courage, especially to make my ideas known.”**

For established researchers such as **Dr Mavis Owusuaa Osei-Wusu, Senior Lecturer at the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) at the University of Ghana,** one of the most valuable outcomes was the opportunity to build partnerships around new research ideas. **“I’ve also had the opportunity to develop a proposal through this programme that could be funded”.**

Participants’comments

It is important to note that the discussions did not stop at research. Plant breeders and social scientists helped ensure that discussions remained focused on outcomes that can benefit farming communities.

“Climate change has affected most farmers in Africa and the main mitigation measures consist of offering drought-tolerant crops such as cassava and sorghum”. “But there are still challenges that I believe the Africa Crop Forum 2026 will help to overcome, for example by improving access to better seed and by improving the processing and marketing of seeds.” said **Emmanuel Justin Mrema,** plant breeder and Research Director at the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI).

It is the women who process and cook cassava who draw the attention of **Dr. Tessy Madu, a Gender Specialist and Research Director at the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) in Umudike, Nigeria. “It is a lot of work and effort for these women,”** she says.

“So how do we reduce the drudgery? How do we make it less taxing for them and put more money in their pockets? That is what worries me.”



Co-construction of ideas by participants during the forum Credit: Alastair Fyfe.

Looking ahead: from Abidjan to Cambridge

At the end of the forum, participants left not only with new contacts and project concepts, but also with a shared sense of purpose. The **Africa Crop Forum 2026** demonstrated that when people from different backgrounds and areas of expertise come together, they can lay the foundations for research that is scientifically excellent, locally relevant and capable of delivering significant benefits to farmers and communities across Africa.



Executive Director of WAVE RESEARCH Pr Justin S. Pita encouraging participants during the Africa Crop Forum 2026. Credit: Alastair Fyfe.



Participants discussions during the forum. Credit: Alastair Fyfe.

The momentum generated in Abidjan will continue over the coming year, as participants further refine project concepts and pursue collaborative funding opportunities. Many will meet again at the **Africa Crop Forum 2027** in Cambridge, United Kingdom, offering an opportunity to share progress and accelerate the journey from scientific discovery to agricultural impact. If the optimism and ambition felt at the **Africa Crop Forum 2026** are any indication, the impact of this event will be felt for a long time to come.

NEXT EDITION

Africa Crop Forum 2027

Cambridge